

Rocky Mountain National Park

2013 Trip Planner and Guide

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Continental Divide, Rocky Mountain National Park. The park is a hiker's paradise with access to stunning high country scenery and amazing wildlife viewing. (Terry Quinn)

A PARK HIGH AND WILD

Encompassing 415 square miles of rock-ribbed wildness, Rocky Mountain National Park is a land of superlatives.

Here, more than 110 of the peaks that soar above 10,000 feet elevation have names, such as Cirrus, Chiefs Head, Isolation, Little Matterhorn, Mummy and Storm. A few high points remain nameless, perhaps awaiting their turn.

Seventy-two mountains exceed 12,000 feet, topping off at 14,259 feet on the expansive summit of Longs Peak. The mountains provide Rocky Mountain National Park with its sense of wonder and inspiration. These great peaks contribute mightily to the “wild, fantastic views” that thrilled noted British visitor Isabella Bird more than a century ago.

Today, each year, approximately three million people visit the park, many driving its roads and hiking a trail system that if linked together would extend from Denver almost to Santa Fe. Despite the changes around and within, Rocky Mountain National Park is a bastion of preservation. And there's more to this park than mountains.

More than 100 square miles of the park are alpine tundra, a land above the trees. Trail Ridge Road and Old Fall River Road offer easy summer access to this wide-open, windswept ecosystem where the startling views seem to span forever.

The Continental Divide runs northwest to southeast through the park on its course from the Seward Peninsula in Alaska to the southern tip of South America. Snowmelt and rainwater to the west of the Great Divide flow toward the Pacific Ocean; runoff to the east is bound for the distant Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

Rocky Mountain also is home to many gorgeous lakes. Some occupy serene forested settings. Others are perched on almost inaccessible shelves high in the park's wilderness, remaining frozen most of the year.

Throughout Rocky Mountain National Park, the unforgettable sound of rushing mountain waters breaks the wilderness silence. The high country gives rise to small streams and great rivers, notably the Colorado, the Cache la Poudre and the Big Thompson.

Several of the park's more than 450 miles of streams tumble down waterfalls that bear such names as Alberta, Ouzel, Timberline and Thunder.

Stands of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, aspen, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce adorn the mountainsides. The forests are interspersed with mountain meadows that fill with colorful wildflowers during the brief high country summer.

This magnificent mountain country is roamed by an amazing array of wildlife. Rocky Mountain ranks as one of America's premier wildlife watching destinations, showcasing majestic elk, sure-footed bighorn sheep, hardy ptarmigan and soaring birds of prey.

People, too, are a part of the Rocky Mountain National Park wilderness. Hikers walk trails used by Indian hunting parties many centuries ago. Fishermen stalk trout in streams where trappers once sought beaver. The failed efforts of prospectors are remembered at

Bear Lake Road Reconstruction

If visiting the Bear Lake area during the summer, plan ahead, hike early or hike late, carpool, expect congestion, and consider exploring other parts of Rocky Mountain National Park. A major road construction project is underway on the lower 5.1 miles of Bear Lake Road, from the intersection of Trail Ridge Road/U.S. 36 to the Park & Ride. The work is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2013. During the fall and winter, be prepared for the possibility of two-thirty-minute delays in both directions. During the late spring through early fall, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Bear Lake Road, from approximately one mile southwest of Moraine Park Visitor Center to Bear Lake, will be accessible by free shuttle bus only, seven days a week. Private vehicles will be allowed both directions prior to 9:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. Visitors in private vehicles or shuttle buses should expect at least two 20-minute delays both directions through the construction area, twenty-four hours a day. There are no construction delays between Park & Ride and Bear Lake. Night closures may be in place as well, but will not impact access to the Moraine Park Campground. Glacier Basin Campground will be closed for the summer of 2013. **Information about the Bear Lake Road Reconstruction Project is available at www.nps.gov/romo, the park's recorded road status line (970 586-1222, or through the park's Information Office at 970-586-1206.**



Lulu City, an abandoned mining town on the park's west side. The Moraine Park Visitor Center and the Holzwarth Historic Site recall the early days of tourism.

But nature reigns supreme here, from the highest summits to the lowest valley floors. The park is a wild preserve where people – in their own special ways – experience nature in all its splendor. Rocky Mountain is a

place where families enjoy short strolls down a hiking trail and picnics at the water's edge. It's also a park where daring mountaineers pit their skills against vertical cliffs of granite.

This high, wild national park offers abundant outdoor opportunities. And those “wild, fantastic views” are out there, awaiting discovery. ■

Planning Essential for Park Visits

No matter what the season, visits to the stunning wilderness of Rocky Mountain National Park require planning and preparation. A few tips:

- ◆ Most visitors arrive during the summer months. Expect lots of company on roads, along popular trails and in parking areas, especially between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and weekends in September, when camping reservations inside the park and lodging reservations outside the park are imperative.
- ◆ Don't push your physical limits in this region located above 8,000 feet. Altitude sickness symptoms include shortness of breath, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, rapid heartbeat and insomnia. If symptoms persist, go to lower elevations.
- ◆ Beware of falling trees. Increasing numbers of dead trees creates an ever-present hazard for park visitors. Trees can fall without warning, especially on windy days or after a snowstorm, when branches are laden with snow.
- ◆ Staying well-hydrated is very important while visiting the park, but there is limited drinking water available. Bring your own water containers and refill them at park visitor centers. Don't drink directly from streams or lakes - giardia is present in the park.
- ◆ Be prepared for changing weather conditions. Even on summer days a light jacket or sweater are often

needed to ward off chilly temperatures.

- ◆ While not naturally aggressive, black bears have a sensitive sense of smell that draws them to odiferous materials, including food, drinks, toiletries, pet food and cooking items. See proper storage techniques listed on page 8. Help protect the bears!
- ◆ Order trip planning materials from pages 10 and 11 of this publication. Products featured in the 2013 *Guide* are particularly helpful in preparing for a trip to the park.
- ◆ Upon arrival, stop by a park visitor center for current information on everything from road and weather conditions to hiking trails, camping and ranger-led programs.
- ◆ For more information, visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/romo or call the Rocky Mountain National Park Information Office at 970-586-1206. ■

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Answer Pages

THE PARK IS ALWAYS OPEN

Rocky Mountain National Park is open 24 hours a day year-round. Visitors can enter or exit any time. Summer is the busiest time of year. Visitor center hours vary seasonally. Some park facilities and roads are closed during the winter months, including much of Trail Ridge Road and Old Fall River Road. If visitors intend to stay overnight, they must be in a designated campground site or a backcountry campsite reserved by a valid permit. Some park campgrounds are open in winter. There is no overnight lodging in the park; see neighboring communities for local options.

THE FOUR SEASONS BE PREPARED

Rocky Mountain National Park weather can be changeable and sometimes extreme. As elevation is gained, temperatures drop and precipitation increases, so be prepared for chilly conditions – especially at higher altitudes – year-round. Bring appropriate footwear and clothing for each season, including rainwear for summer storms and winter gear designed to protect against extreme cold and wind. Layers of insulating, wind-proof clothing like synthetic or wool are recommended at all times of year, especially for higher elevations. Temperatures, precipitation, and conditions can vary year to year, and sometimes the seasons blur together - it can snow on the mountains any month of the year!

SUMMER (MID-JUNE — EARLY SEPTEMBER)

Sunny mornings, afternoon thunderstorms often with dangerous lightning, and clear, cool nights typify this glorious mountain season. This is the busiest time of year in the park, when visitors enjoy wildflowers, possible wildlife sightings, and most all park facilities are open.

AUTUMN (MID-SEPTEMBER — NOVEMBER)
In general, autumn comes early to the high country. Days often start with clear, frosty mornings with bright blue skies, ending with chilly nights. Snowstorms are possible, and Trail Ridge Road and Old Fall River Road can temporarily close due to snow. Both roads usually close for the season by mid- to late-October. The elk rut is at its height from mid-September through mid-October. Aspens usually turn golden in the Grand Lake area in early September. On the east side, autumn colors commonly start at Bear Lake in mid-September and in the Estes Park area in late September. Temperature, rain, snow and wind can affect the trees and cause the leaves to fall early.

WINTER (DECEMBER — MARCH)
Conditions can range considerably this time of year. Days at lower elevations on the east side of the park can be windy, cool and snow-free,

while higher elevations experience extreme winds, great temperature ranges and howling snowstorms. Typical west side winters have more snow, less wind and cold temperatures. Though some park roads and facilities are closed, this is a quieter time throughout the park and often a good time to view wildlife. Snowshoeing and cross-country and back-country skiing are popular activities on both the east and the west sides of the park.

SPRING (APRIL — MID-JUNE)
Spring in the park is very unpredictable. March and April are typically the snowiest months on the east side, with snows often occurring in May and even early June. Spring snows tend to be much wetter. However, warm, dry, sunny spring days when the first flowers bloom and plows are working to clear the upper reaches of Trail Ridge Road are also enjoyable.

BE INFORMED
Trail Ridge Road Status – recorded message on the current road status, 970-586-1222
Colorado Department of Transportation Road Conditions 877-315-7623 or www.cotrip.org

RANGER-LED PROGRAMS
A wide range of ranger-led walks, talks and evening programs is offered throughout the summer. In winter, ski and snowshoe treks are available by reservation. Programs are listed in the official park newspaper. For ore information, call 970-586-1206 or visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/ranger_led_activities.htm

PETS
Leashed pets are allowed only in areas accessed by vehicles, including roadsides, picnic areas and campgrounds. Leashes must be no longer than six feet. Pets are not permitted on trails or in the backcountry. They are allowed on national forest trails. Boarding facilities are available in nearby communities.

FISHING
Populations of trout species, including brown, brook, rainbow and cutthroat, are found in the park. Fishing is permitted in designated park waters. A valid Colorado license is required for all persons 16 years of age and older. Annual, five-day and one-day resident and non-resident licenses are sold in neighboring communities. Some lakes and streams are closed to fishing to protect threatened native species. Other areas are catch-and-release only, with special regulations in place. Detailed information, including license fees, open and closed waters, methods of capture and limits on size and possession, is available at park visitor centers, ranger stations and online at www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/fishing.htm

HORSEBACK RIDING
Several stables are located in and around the park, offering guided rides along park trails. For a list of private companies contracted to conduct horseback rides in the park visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/goodsandservices.htm

Private stock is allowed. More than 260 miles of park trails are open to horses, mules, ponies, llamas and burros; visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/horses.htm

BICYCLING
Bicycling is allowed on all park roads, unless otherwise posted. Bicycling is not permitted on any trails. Road biking in the park is strenuous, with great elevation gain, narrow, winding roads and no shoulders. Plan ahead for changeable weather, afternoon thunderstorms and high winds above treeline. Be well supplied with water and food. Bicyclists must ride single-file only with the flow of traffic, and they must obey all traffic regulations. Motorists: Give ample room when passing bicyclists.

FOOD & WATER
Adequate hydration is important to help prevent altitude sickness. Drink plenty of water, two to three times more than usual. Always take water when hiking. During the summer, the only place to purchase food and beverages in the park is at the Café at Trail Ridge Store, adjacent to the Alpine Visitor Center. When shuttle buses are operating, bottled water is sold at the Park & Ride. Restaurants and grocery stores are located in nearby communities. The park encourages limiting

the use of plastic water bottles by refilling reusable water containers at visitor centers and campgrounds. Recycling receptacles are available parkwide. In winter, water is only available at open visitor centers. Never drink untreated water from streams or lakes.

LODGING & VISITOR SERVICES
No lodging is available inside the park, but hundreds of accommodations are located in nearby communities. Contact the Estes Park Visitor Center (800-443-7837, 970-577-9900, www.visitestespark.com) and the Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce (800-531-1019, 970-627-3402, or www.grandlakechamber.com) for information on everything from lodging, camping, restaurants and retail stores to guided tours, recreational opportunities, instruction and gear sales or rentals.

NATIONAL FORESTS
The Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests (ARNF) surround Rocky Mountain National Park. In addition to campgrounds, hiking and cross-country skiing/snowshoeing, the National Forest offers some recreational opportunities not available in the park, including hiking with dogs, water recreation, four-wheeling, hunting, mountain biking and downhill skiing. For further information, contact the ARNF Fort Collins Ranger Station at 970-295-6700; the Boulder Ranger Station at 303-541-2500; the Granby Ranger Station at 970-887-4100; the Arapaho National Recreation Area (Lake Granby area) at 970-887-4100; or visit www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf/

ENTRANCE FEES	
All passes are available at all park entrance stations. Payment for fees and passes must be by U.S. currency, coin, check (payable to the National Park Service), or American Express, Visa, Master Card or Discover credit cards. Debit cards are accepted by the park.	
Pass	Fee
Automobile 7-day pass	\$20
Motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, mopeds	\$10 per person, not to exceed \$20 per vehicle.
Rocky Mountain National Park Annual Pass	\$40 pass provides unlimited entry to Rocky for 1 year.
Rocky Mountain National Park/ Arapaho National Recreation Area Annual Pass	\$50 pass provides unlimited entry to both areas for 1 year.
America the Beautiful Interagency Pass*	\$80 provides unlimited entry to federal recreation sites (including National Parks) that charge an entrance or standard amenity fee for 1 year.
America the Beautiful Senior Pass*	\$10 lifetime pass for U.S. citizens or permanent residents age 62 or over.
America the Beautiful Access Pass*	Free lifetime pass for U.S. citizens or permanent residents with a disability.
America the Beautiful Military Pass*	Free unlimited entry to federal recreation sites for active duty military personnel and dependents with required proper identification (CAC card or DD form 1173) for 1 year.
America the Beautiful Volunteer Pass*	Free pass of NPS and/or Federal Recreational Lands Volunteers who have acquired 250 service hours on a cumulative basis. Good for 1 year.
*Agencies that honor the America the Beautiful interagency passes include the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Reclamation.	

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING PERMITS

Permits are required for all camping in backcountry sites and zones. Carry-in/carry-out hard-sided bear-resistant food storage canisters are required for all backpacking park-wide between May 1 and October 31. There are inherent risks to traveling and camping in the backcountry. One of those risks is hazard trees. Campers should assess their campsite for standing dead trees that could fall. Camp safely away from standing dead trees, as near as is safely possible to the silver metal arrowhead that marks the site.

Campers should always follow Leave No Trace ethics. To prevent bears from breaking into cars, food storage lockers are located at several trailheads for backcountry campers with extra food. Don't store extra food in vehicles overnight! Updates on the current status of specific backcountry campsites and use permits are available from the Backcountry Office.

Reservations for summer permits:

By phone, mail or in person:

March 1 - May 15

By mail, or in person only:

May 16 - September 30

Reservations for winter, spring & fall permits:

By phone, mail or in person:

Jan. 1 - May 15; Oct. 1 - Dec. 31

By mail, or in person only :

Any time of year

Backcountry Offices are located next door to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center on the east side and at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center on the west side. An administrative fee of \$20 is charged for backcountry camping between May 1 and October 31. For details and further reservation information, visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm

2013 CAMPGROUND INFORMATION

- ◆ Every park campsite has a tent pad, fire grate and picnic table.
- ◆ When the water is on in the summer, all campsites are \$20.00/site/night. When the water is off in the winter, all campsites are \$14.00/site/night.
- ◆ Moraine Park Campground has a stall facility to hang your solar-heated shower bag. There are no other shower facilities in the park.
- ◆ America the Beautiful Senior and Access Pass holders receive a 50% discount on camping fees.
- ◆ Quiet hours: 10:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m. Generator hours: 7:30 – 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 – 8:30 p.m. (where allowed).
- ◆ Maximum 8 people per site.
- ◆ Stay Limit: 7-nights total, park-wide, June 1 – September 30, with an additional 14 nights allowed October 1 – May 31. Limits are on a park basis rather than on a per campground basis.
- ◆ Reservations may be made up to 6 months in advance at 877-444-6777 or at www.recreation.gov, or use the Recreation.gov iPhone App.
- ◆ All park campgrounds usually fill by midmorning in summer and on fall weekends.

PICNICKING

Picnicking is very popular in the park. Picnic areas are indicated on the official park map. All are first-come, first-served. Some have fire grates, some allow portable grills, and some have restroom/vault toilet facilities. Visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/picnicking.htm for more information.

LOST AND FOUND

Please turn in found items at any park visitor center. The Backcountry Office handles lost items; contact them at 970-586-1242.

FIREARMS

Firearms are permitted in Rocky Mountain National Park. As of February 22, 2010, a federal law allows people who can legally possess firearms under federal, Colorado and local laws, to legally possess firearms in this park. It is the visitor's responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable federal, Colorado and local firearms laws. Federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities in Rocky Mountain National Park, and those places are posted with signs. The discharge of firearms and hunting within the park are prohibited. Visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/firearms_regulations_rmnp.htm for more information.

ACCESSIBILITY

- ◆ The Disabled Traveler's Companion website has detailed information about accessible facilities in the park; visit www.tdtcompanion.com/NPS/Rocky/
- ◆ Most park shuttle buses are accessible and can accommodate wheelchairs. Contact shuttle staff or rangers if accommodation is needed.
- ◆ The park film is captioned for hearing impaired visitors at Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche visitor centers, and features audio description for the visually impaired at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.
- ◆ The TTY for hearing impaired callers to the park is 970-586-1319.
- ◆ Four accessible trails are designed to accommodate visitors in wheelchairs in the park; see the *Accessible and Family-friendly Trails* section on page 7 for details.
- ◆ The Sprague Lake Accessible Backcountry Campsite is available by reservation. This site can accommodate 12 campers, including five wheelchairs. The administrative permit fee is \$20 between May 1 and October 31. Call the Backcountry Office for more information, 970-586-1242.

FREE WI-FI

Bring your wireless electronic device for free WI-FI service, available in and around the Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche visitor centers.

SERVICE ANIMALS

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Service animals perform some of the tasks that a disabled individual cannot perform for themselves. Service animals that have been individually trained to perform specific tasks for the benefit of persons with disabilities are allowed in the park. Emotional support ("therapy animals") are not service animals under the ADA and may not access trails or other non-motorized areas or park buildings.

PHONE & WEB INFO

Park website: www.nps.gov/romo

General park information:

970-586-1206

Trail Ridge Road status:

970-586-1222

Campground reservations:

877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov

Recreation.gov (iPhone App)

Backcountry information:

970-586-1242

Emergencies: 911 or 970-586-1203

Colorado Travel and Tourism:

800-COLORADO,

www.colorado.com ■

CAMPGROUND INFORMATION

Campground	Elevation (feet)	# Sites Available	Summer Reservations Possible ?	Summer Firewood/ Ice	Max RV/Trailer Length	Summer DumpStation/ Potable Water Hose Hookup	Notes
Aspenglen 5/22/13 Last night to stay is 9/23/13	8200	54	Yes (Sites can filled by reservation)	Yes	30'	No (campers use dump stations at Moraine Park Campground or Timber Creek Campground	Some pull-along sites. A-Loop: tents including walk-tos; B-Loop: no generators; C-Loop: generators okay
Glacier Basin	8500	CLOSED IN 2013					
Glacier Basin Group Sites	8500	CLOSED IN 2013					
Longs Peak 5/23/13 Last night to stay is 11/3/13	9405	26	Always first-come, first-served	Firewood only	Tents only	No	Tents only. Flush toilets (summer), vault toilets (winter)
Moraine Park Open year-round. 2013 sites can be reserved for 5/22 - 10/8. Same reservation info.	8160	244	Yes (Sites can be filled by reservation) Summer 2013: B-Loop first-come, first-served	Yes	Limited number of RV/trailer sites up to 40'	Yes	Located on Bear Lake Road. Flush toilets, except B & E Loops where there are vault toilets year-round. D-Loop: no generators. Pay phones
Moraine Park Group Sites E-Loop	8160	3	Summer 2013: Three group sites are available for reservations.	Yes	N/A	Vault toilets	Tents only, unlimited number of tents allowed (must fit in space). \$3/person/ night
Timber Creek Open year-round	8900	98	Always first-come, first-served	Firewood only	30'	Yes	The only west side campground. <i>Hazard tree removal has made this campground very open, with no shade.</i>

Suggested Activities

A WEEK IN THE PARK

Rocky Has Plenty to Ponder

When famed *Rocky Mountain News* editor William Byers visited this region back in 1864, he tried to climb Longs Peak. Byers failed, but he had a memorable experience making it to the summit of neighboring Mount Meeker.

To anyone planning a visit to this stretch of the Rockies, Byers advised a trip of at least eight days. Of course, he traveled by horseback and it took him a couple of days just to get here from Denver. But a week in this area definitely is worth considering, especially if you're in search of the perfect trip. Here are some suggestions on how to spend seven days in Rocky:

DAY ONE: Time to stretch those legs. Pick a gentle trail for a stroll. Amble toward a waterfall (maybe Copeland, Adams or Alberta) or around a popular lake (perhaps Bear, Sprague or Lily). Many people require a day or two to get used to the altitude, and some time spent sauntering at the park's lower elevations is a good idea.

DAY TWO: If you're feeling acclimated to the elevation, explore the high country by car. The trip across Trail Ridge Road is punctuated by many pullouts that will introduce you to the region. There's lots to see – scenery, wildlife and wildflowers. A leisurely drive with lots of stops, short walks and chats with the rangers will make this a memorable outing. Top off your full day with an evening ranger talk at one of the campgrounds or visitor centers. (Inquire at a visitor center or call 970-586-1206 for topics and times.)

DAY THREE: Begin your morning with a ranger-led birdwatching expedition. (See the park newspaper for programs.) You do not have to be an avid birdwatcher to enjoy an introduction to this informative and interesting activity. In only an hour or two, you can learn a lot about the park and its wild inhabitants. Spend the rest of the day driving up the Old Fall River Road to Fall River Pass, pausing for a picnic along the way.

DAY FOUR: Do what the locals do: Hike the backcountry. Pick a more ambitious walk to a location suited to your ability. (See page 7 of this publication for hiking suggestions.) Plan on an afternoon rain shower.

DAY FIVE: Take a Rocky Mountain Field Seminar. The non-profit Rocky Mountain Nature Association offers half-day, day-long and multi-day classes for adults, kids and families on all sorts of natural and cultural history subjects. In a short time and at a reasonable cost, you can learn a lot from experts about subjects such as outdoor skills, photography, wildlife, art and history. (Reservations are required. For information and registration, call 970-586-3262 or visit www.rmna.org.)

DAY SIX: Now that you're better acclimated, it's time to try a more rigorous hike. High country lakes are especially popular destinations. Today, you also can apply what you learned from your chats

with rangers, the birdwatching trip and your seminar.

DAY SEVEN: Try something new. Perhaps you've never ridden a horse, been fly fishing, climbed a mountain or sketched an alpine scene. Here's your chance. After you've sampled one or two Rocky Mountain wonders, you'll find there's a lot more to do than you thought. But after this first week, you're off to a great start. ■



RMNA bookstores recommend:
➤ *A Day in Rocky*



Fun, affordable and taught by top-flight instructors, Rocky Mountain Field Seminars offer expert insights into the park's myriad wonders. (Joan Nesselroad)

A DAY IN THE PARK

You'll See Mountains, and Much More

What can we see in a single day in Rocky Mountain National Park? Lots of mountains, that's for sure. What-ever else you see here depends on what you're looking for.

Several park rangers and local residents were asked what they'd suggest if a traveler had only a single day to spend exploring the park. Here's what they recommend:

- ◆ **Drive Trail Ridge Road.** It is one of America's most spectacular scenic drives. Stopping at various vista points – from Many Parks Curve to Farview Curve – and soaking in the grandeur can make this trip last all day long, two or three hours at the least.
- ◆ **Take a hike.** Rocky Mountain National Park is one of the most user-friendly parks in the nation. There are lots of trails and a wide variety of destinations, from lakes and waterfalls to summits, forests and meadows. An hour or two of strolling allows you to get an enticing sample of Rocky Mountain's renowned backcountry.
- ◆ **Watch for wildlife.** Viewing the great variety of animals and birds is one of the most popular activities

in the park. A few words of warning: Mind your manners, respect their privacy and never feed them.

- ◆ **Attend a ranger-led program.** Year-round, park rangers lead a variety of interesting and informative walks, talks, hikes, evening programs and more. Check schedules in current park newspapers.
- ◆ **Visit a visitor center or historical site.** Places such as the Moraine Park Visitor Center (filled with natural history exhibits) or the Holzwarth Historic Site (preserving a historical resort) help us understand what the area was like before the park was formed.
- ◆ **Enjoy a picnic.** Many places within the park provide pleasant outdoor settings made better with family, friends and food. Whether it takes place somewhere along the roadway, in one of the dozens of picnic areas or simply on a flat rock out in the woods, a picnic is one of life's little pleasures – easily organized and long remembered.
- ◆ **Take pictures.** The park is perfect for photography. Wildlife is abundant and the mountain scenes tend to change hourly with varying light, clouds and shadows. ■

Discover Nature With Your Kids

Kids are born naturalists. They access the natural world by asking questions. Introducing children to the outdoors can begin at any time, but why not begin early? And why not start them out in Rocky Mountain National Park, one of the country's premier outdoor wonderlands?

Infants can be carried in a front pack, tucked inside the jacket if it's chilly. Hike anywhere. The stunning scenery and the fresh mountain air will put them to sleep in short order.

Toddlers more actively interact with nature. It is a time of observation, of making connections and stockpiling information. This is a wonderful time to introduce them to one of the many discovery trips found around the park. A few suggestions:

- 🐾 Explore the edges of Bear Lake while enjoying the guidebook-guided trail tour that explains the area's interesting natural and human history. Water holds an amazing variety of plant and animal life that will pique a child's curiosity.
- 🐾 Discover Rocky Mountain's wonderful wildlife. At particular times throughout the year (ask a park ranger), the bighorn sheep come down to Sheep Lakes. Kids especially enjoy watching them

cross the road after the lambs are born in late May.

🐾 Kids a little bit older might enjoy expending energy hiking along a trail, but most seem happiest thoroughly exploring a smaller area. On any hike with 3 to 6 year olds, it's a good idea to include a magnifying glass in the backpack. Textures of trees, plants, bugs and rocks are exciting when viewed close-up.

🐾 Children love climbing on rocks. The trail to Gem Lake is a rocky paradise lined by boulders that are perfectly arranged for climbing. The scenery is inspiring for parents and kids alike.

🐾 In the early summer, enjoy the amazing display of colorful wildflowers found along the trails to Cub Lake and around Lily Lake. Have the youngsters keep an eye out for hummingbirds that may be visiting the flowers. Watch for beaver activity along streams. Beaver dams, active or abandoned, are easy to spot, and stream banks are ideal places to look for animal tracks.

🐾 Kids ages 12 and under have fun learning about the park through the popular Junior Ranger program. Age-specific Junior Ranger activities booklets are available for free at visitor centers

throughout the park in both English and Spanish. After completing the activities in the colorful, heavily illustrated booklets, youngsters are awarded an official Rocky Mountain National Park Junior ranger badge. During the summer months, kids can enjoy the special Junior Ranger programs available at their Headquarters at Hidden Valley. ■

Keeping Rocky WILD Junior Rangers Make a Difference!!

Hey, kids! Be sure to pick up a Junior Ranger activity booklet at any park visitor center - it's full of fun games and great stuff to discover with your family and friends. When you're finished, you can earn an official Junior Ranger badge! There's more national park adventures to be found at home - visit these park websites for some cool park activities:

www.nps.gov/learn
(click on **webrangers**)
www.nps.gov/romo/forkids
(click on **Junior Ranger**)
www.heartoftherockies.net
(click on **Just for Kids!**)

Scenic Drives



Magnificent mountain scenery is commonplace along Trail Ridge Road, a summer-only highway that climbs to a high point of 12,183 feet in Rocky Mountain National Park. (Dean Martinson)

TRAIL RIDGE ROAD

Sweeping Vistas Abound on This ‘Sensational’ Highway

Trail Ridge Road, Rocky Mountain National Park’s renowned highway to the sky, inspired awe before the first motorist ever traveled it. “It is hard to describe what a sensation this new road is going to make,” predicted Horace Albright, director of the National Park Service, in 1931 during the road’s construction. “You will have the whole sweep of the Rockies before you in all directions.”

The next year, Rocky Mountain’s wilderness interior was introduced to the first travelers along an auto route Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* proclaimed a “scenic wonder road of the world.”

Was all this simply exaggeration? Hardly.

Spanning the 50 miles between Estes Park on the park’s east side and Grand Lake on the west, Trail Ridge Road more than lives up to its early billing. Eleven miles of this high highway travel above treeline, the elevation near 11,000 feet where the park’s evergreen forests come to a halt. As it winds across the alpine tundra’s vastness to its high point at 12,183 feet elevation, Trail Ridge Road offers motorists thrilling views, wildlife sightings and spectacular alpine wildflower displays.

Whether they begin their journey at Estes Park or Grand Lake, Trail Ridge Road travelers climb some 4,000 feet in a matter of minutes. The changes that occur en route are fascinating to observe. Montane woodlands of aspen and ponderosa pine soon give way to thick subalpine forests of fir and spruce. At treeline, the last stunted, wind-battered trees yield to the alpine tundra.

Up on that cold, windswept world, conditions resemble those found in the Canadian or Alaskan Arctic. The tundra normally is windy and 20 to 30 degrees cooler than Estes Park or Grand Lake. The

sun beats down with high-ultraviolet intensity. The vistas, best enjoyed from one of several marked road pullovers, are extravagant, sweeping north to Wyoming, east across the Front Range cities and Great Plains, south and west into the heart of the Rockies.

For all its harshness, the Trail Ridge tundra is a place of vibrant life and vivid colors. Pikas, marmots, ptarmigans and bighorn sheep may be seen. About 200 species of tiny alpine plants hug the ground. Despite a growing season that lasts less than 50 days, many plants bloom exuberantly, adorning the green summer tundra with swatches of yellow, red, pink, blue, purple and white. All colors are seen from the Tundra Communities Trail, a half-hour walk beginning near the parking area at Rock Cut.

Below treeline, forested moraines, great heaps of earth and rock debris left behind by melting Ice Age glaciers, rise above lush mountain meadows. The Continental Divide, where streamflows are separated east from west, is crossed at Milner Pass, located in subalpine woodlands at a surprisingly low 10,120 feet elevation. Moose munch greenery in the upper reaches of the Colorado River, which flows through the scenic Kawuneeche Valley. Grazing elk greet sunrise and sunset in many of the park’s forest-rimmed meadows.

Trail Ridge Road is a paved two-lane U.S. Highway (34) with no shoulders or guardrails. The road is only open when weather conditions are favorable, usually late-May through mid-October.

At all elevations, the drive on Trail Ridge Road is a memorable adventure. Put aside at least a half day for the trip. Longer, if possible.

It’s worth the time. The experience, to be sure, is hard to describe. ■

OLD FALL RIVER ROAD

Route Offers a Look at Rocky’s Nature Close-Up

Completed in 1920, Old Fall River Road earned the distinction of being the first auto route in Rocky Mountain National Park offering access to the alpine tundra. In the minds of many visitors, this beloved byway through the wilds remains foremost.

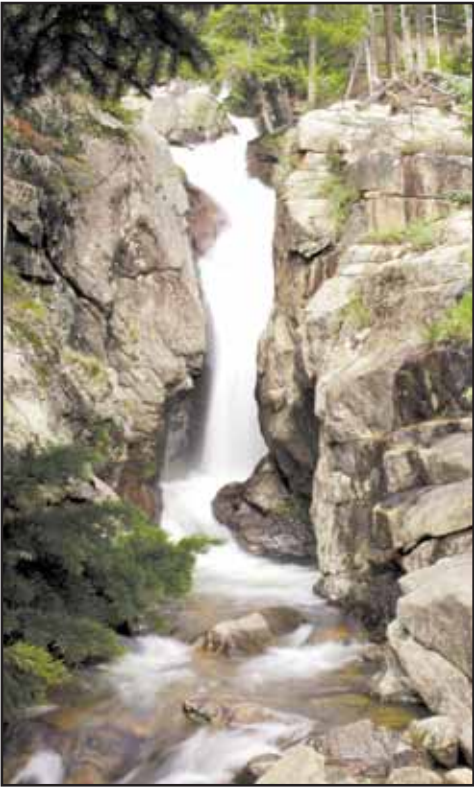
Trail Ridge Road is well known as “the nation’s highest continuous paved highway.” Old Fall River Road is a “motor nature trail.” Primarily gravel, one-way uphill, with no guardrails and punctuated by tight switchbacks, the slower-paced, 9-mile-long Old Fall River Road leads travelers from Horseshoe Park (just west of the Fall River Entrance) up a deeply cut valley to Fall River Pass, 11,796 feet above sea level. The posted speed limit is 15 miles per hour, a clear indication that a drive up Old Fall River Road is not for the impatient.

The road is narrow and curved. Vehicles more than 25 feet long and vehicles with trailers are prohibited. In some places, the trees of the montane and subalpine forests are so close that motorists can touch them. Old Fall River Road is ideal for visitors seeking intimacy with nature.

The road follows a route taken long ago by American Indian hunters who came to the park area in search of its abundant game. Early in the trip, travelers pass an alluvial fan scoured out by the devastating 1982 Lawn Lake flood. Nearby is the site of a labor camp that housed state convicts who worked on the road project many decades ago. For these men, crime did not pay. The laborers were forced to build the three-mile stretch of road to the scenic respite of Chasm Falls with no more than hand tools at their disposal.

After passing Willow Park, where elk often graze, Old Fall River Road enters the alpine tundra. Awaiting there is the Fall River Cirque, birthplace of glaciers that once worked their way through the mountain valleys. The road traverses the headwall of this amphitheater-like formation before joining Trail Ridge Road near the Alpine Visitor Center at Fall River Pass.

Ahead lie the wonders of Trail Ridge Road, which leads travelers east to Estes Park or southwest to Grand Lake. Behind, but not soon forgotten, is that winding old route that offers travelers a taste of auto travel in days gone by and a look at Rocky Mountain’s nature close-up. ■



Chasm Falls is just one of the many natural wonders awaiting travelers along Old Fall River Road. (Richard Youngblood)

More information about Old Fall River Road available at: www.nps.gov/romo/playourvisit/old_fall_river_road.htm

When Are the Park Roads Open?


Trail Ridge Road usually opens for the season on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend. It is not uncommon for the road to be closed temporarily during the summer season because of snowfalls. Heavy snows typically close the road for the winter season in mid- to late October.

Old Fall River Road usually is open from early July to late September.

Bear Lake Road is open year-round, but visitors are strongly urged to take advantage of the free Bear Lake Road corridor shuttle bus service available from late May through September. (See page 12 for shuttle information.) ■



Early visitors enjoying the view from Old Fall River Road.



RMNA bookstores recommend:

- *Geology Along Trail Ridge Rd*
- *Guide to Trail Ridge Road*

More information about Trail Ridge Road available at:

www.nps.gov/romo/playourvisit/trail_ridge_road.htm

and www.nps.gov/romo/playourvisit/road_status.htm

Hiking & Climbing

ENJOY – AND PROTECT – Rocky’s ALPINE TUNDRA

Approximately one-third of Rocky Mountain National Park is alpine tundra, which generally begins at elevations above 10,500 feet and boasts some of the most dramatic mountain scenery imaginable.

Many tundra trekkers are captivated by sweeping views encompassing rock, ice, sky and distant ranges. But pausing to take in the subtle wonders of the alpine world can enhance the hiking experience. The vast, wide-open landscape in this land above the trees tells some amazing stories of adaptation and survival.

Animals such as pikas and marmots can be found in rocky areas, where they persevere in an arctic-like climate. Elk find relief

from summer’s heat in this high-altitude environment. Several species of birds spend the summer on the tundra, including horned larks, well-camouflaged ptarmigans and American pipits. Tiny alpine flowers bloom in abundance during the short growing season, their stunning colors inviting hikers to bend down for a close-up look.

With the exception of four Tundra Protection Areas located at the Alpine Visitor Center, Rock Cut, Forest Canyon Overlook and Gore Range Overlook, visitors are permitted to hike on the tundra throughout the park. Alpine plants may be adaptable to the rugged climate above treeline, but they are no match for the soles of hiking boots. Areas

repeatedly trod by hikers can take decades to recover as the short alpine growing season provides only a few weeks for damaged plant communities to heal.

To minimize impact and preserve this fragile environment, please follow a few simple guidelines:

- ◆ Obey regulations prohibiting off-trail hiking in the four Tundra Protection Areas. These zones are located in places where visitation is highest, and hikers must stay on marked trails.
- ◆ Always stay on hiking trails where they exist.
- ◆ Walk on rocks or snow when possible to avoid contact with the alpine tundra’s fragile plant life.
- ◆ Minimize trampling. When hiking off-trail across the open tundra, never walk single-file. ■



Alpine avens, King’s crown, chiming bells and other exquisite alpine plants are easily damaged by careless hikers. (Nancy Wilson)

Learn more about Rocky’s alpine tundra at: w.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/alpine_tundra_ecosystem.htm

Climbing For Technical Types

Mountain adventures in the park are not limited to hiking. Technical climbing routes abound east of the Continental Divide.

Lower-elevation climbing is especially popular on Lumpy Ridge. Less-accessible technical climbing routes can be found high above treeline. They often involve a lengthy hike, higher elevations and considerably greater skill and risk.

For more information about specific climbing sites, safety precautions and regulations, contact the park’s Backcountry Office at 970-586-1242. ■

LONGS PEAK MUCH MORE THAN A MOUNTAIN

At 14,259 feet, Longs Peak towers above all other summits in Rocky Mountain National Park. Different angles show the great mountain’s unique profiles. Changing weather reflects Longs Peak’s many moods.

In the summertime – the season when thousands climb to Longs’ summit – those moods can be unpredictable. Variable weather, including snow, cold temperatures and gusty winds can occur at any time. Most days see clouds building in the afternoon sky, often exploding in storms of brief, heavy rain, thunder and dangerous lightning. People usually start hiking well before dawn to avoid these weather-related hazards.

The Keyhole Route is usually free of ice and snow between mid-July and early September, though conditions do vary. Check with a ranger, call 970-586-1206, or visit the park website www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm. It is a strenuous eight miles one-way with an elevation gain of 4,850 feet, crossing sheer vertical rock faces, narrow ledges, loose rock and steep cliffs. Good route-finding and rock scrambling skills are a must, and physical fitness and acclimation to the high altitude are required.

This challenging route was the choice of British adventurer Isabella Bird in 1873. Her words of wonder and praise for Longs Peak, which concluded that it was “much more than a mountain,” ring true today as if the ink in her book, *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains*, was still fresh.

Bird, who ascended Longs in the company of mountain man “Rocky Mountain Jim” Nugent, was not the first woman to climb Longs Peak. She was preceded to the summit that same year by Anna Dickinson. Both followed in the footsteps of Addie Alexander and a “Miss Bartlett,” two women who successfully climbed Longs in 1871.

Tragically, there are those who never left Longs Peak alive. A stone gazebo at the Keyhole formation displays a plaque memorializing Agnes Vaille, a well-known climber in the 1920s. The pioneer of numerous mountain routes in the Rockies, Vaille attempted the first winter ascent of the mountain’s precipitous East Face by a woman in January, 1925. She and her climbing partner, Walter Kiener, succeeded after



Much of the year, snow covers Longs Peak, the park’s highest mountain summit. (Linda Wold)

more than 24 hours of dangerous mountaineering through frigid blizzard conditions. While descending the North Face, Vaille fell 100 feet down the rock cliff. Her injuries were minor, but because of fatigue and hypothermia, Vaille was unable to walk. Kiener, battling frostbite that would cost him toes and fingers, promptly summoned help. Vaille’s rescuers arrived to find her dead from exposure.

Agnes Vaille and more than 50 other climbers have lost their lives on Longs Peak. It is not a mountain tolerant of the unprepared.

Keyhole Route climbers should be properly outfitted with sturdy footwear, layers of clothing, high-energy food and plenty of water. Use caution when ascending or descending steep areas. Don’t be too proud to back off when bad weather threatens or when conditions are marginal.

Climbing Longs Peak is an experience not easily forgotten. But it is essential to be prepared, to be aware of surroundings and weather conditions, and always to use common sense. Have a safe trip. ■

Learn more about climbing Longs Peak at: www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm

Know Before You Hike...

- **Stay together** - don’t separate on the trail and always keep children with the group.
- **Leave detailed plans** of your itinerary, and stick to the plan!
- **Be aware of falling trees**, which are hazards throughout the park.
- **Don’t count on cell phone service** in the park - there are many “dead” spots in this rugged terrain.
- **Be aware and prepared for changing weather.** Thunderstorms develop quickly, so avoid being above treeline after noon when thunderstorms often occur.
- **Drink lots of water** to stay hydrated in this dry climate, and bring high-energy snacks to fuel your hike.
- **Wear sturdy footwear** for rocky park trails.
- **Practice Leave No Trace ethics:** plan ahead and prepare; travel on durable surfaces; dispose of waste properly; leave what you find; respect wildlife; be considerate of other visitors.

Always remember:
pets are not allowed on any park trails!

- *Alpine Wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains*
- *Trails Illustrated Topo Maps*

A program of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association

Bus Tour Adventures in Rocky Mountain National Park!

with Rocky Mountain Field Seminars

- ◆Grand Lake Safari: Educational Adventure by Bus
- ◆Journey to the Top! A Trail Ridge Road Bus Adventure
- ◆Elk Expeditions

970-586-3262

Sit back and experience the park with a professional naturalist in these educational park tours. Available throughout the summer, from June through October. Ask for a schedule at park visitor centers, or, call 970-586-3262 for more info. Visit www.rmna.org to register!

Popular Hikes

Destination	Trailhead	Distance (one-way in miles)
-------------	-----------	--------------------------------

Lakes

NYMPH LAKE	Bear Lake	0.5
This is a great “get into shape” hike for new park arrivals.		
DREAM LAKE	Bear Lake	1.1
Dramatic scenery rewards hikers making this short climb.		
BIERSTADT LAKE	Bierstadt Lake	1.4
	Bear Lake	1.6
This popular mountain lake is nestled in heavy timber.		
THE POOL	Fern Lake	1.7
A deep pool of the Big Thompson offers a peaceful respite.		
EMERALD LAKE	Bear Lake	1.8
Mountains rise steeply above this popular hiking destination.		
GEM LAKE	Lumpy Ridge	1.8
The trail to this pretty lake usually is hikable year-round.		
LAKE HAIYAHA	Bear Lake	2.1
Haiyaha is almost surrounded by the Continental Divide.		
CUB LAKE	Cub Lake	2.3
This trail is adorned with early summer wildflowers.		
MILLS LAKE	Glacier Gorge	2.8
Sweeping mountain scenery surrounds this lovely lake.		
THE LOCH	Glacier Gorge	3.0
The popular lake sits in an inspiring mountain setting.		
FERN LAKE	Fern Lake	3.8
A tourist lodge once sat upon Fern Lake’s scenic shoreline.		
ODESSA LAKE	Bear Lake	4.1
	Fern Lake	4.4
Dramatic peaks loom above this stunning mountain lake.		
CHASM LAKE	Longs Peak	4.2
Don’t feed the begging marmots by this rugged lake.		
SANDBEACH LAKE	Sandbeach Lake	4.2
A steady climb rewards hikers with fine scenery.		
FINCH LAKE	Finch Lake	4.5
Remnants of the 1978 Ouzel Fire highlight this Wild Basin trek.		
YPSILON LAKE	Lawn Lake	4.5
Views of Ypsilon Mountain grace the Mummy Range lake.		
SKY POND	Glacier Gorge	4.9
Divide views surround an awesome destination.		
BLACK LAKE	Glacier Gorge	5.0
This mountain lake is set above dramatic Ribbon Falls.		
LONE PINE LAKE	East Inlet	5.5
A sheer rock wall ascends from Lone Pine’s far shore.		
BLUEBIRD LAKE	Wild Basin	6.0
Lovely wildflowers highlight this southeastern hike.		
LAWN LAKE	Lawn Lake	6.2
It’s a steep hike to this Mummy Range lake.		



Lake Haiyaha (Nancy Wilson)

PEAR LAKE	Finch Lake	6.5
Hikers find solitude at a remote Wild Basin destination.		
THUNDER LAKE	Wild Basin	6.8
This high-elevation lake sits in a flower-filled meadow.		
LAKE VERNA	East Inlet	6.9
Fjord-like Lake Verna rewards the ambitious hiker.		
LION LAKE No. 1	Wild Basin	7.0
Wildflowers grow in profusion at this subalpine lake.		
SPIRIT LAKE	East Inlet	7.8
Some hike to the remote west side lake to fish.		
LAKE NOKONI	North Inlet	9.9
Tranquility abounds at this distant west side lake.		
LAKE NANITA	North Inlet	11.0
Hiking in the park’s interior is a wilderness experience.		











RMNA bookstores recommend:

➤ *Best of Bear Lake Country*

➤ *Hiking Rocky Mountain National Park*

Accessible and Family-friendly Trails

	ALLUVIAL FAN	Endovalley Road	0.2	Strollers permitted
A quarter-mile paved interpretive trail connects two parking areas located at this flood-scoured feature.				
	HOLZWARTH HISTORIC SITE	Trail Ridge Road	0.5	Strollers permitted
It’s a short walk on a level gravel trail to this dude ranch complex developed in the early 1900s.				
	SPRAGUE LAKE	Sprague Lake	.5 (loop)	Strollers permitted
Lovely views of the Continental Divide grace this level, hardened trail. An accessible campsite is located in the area.				
	BEAR LAKE NATURE TRAIL	Bear Lake	0.6 (loop)	Partially accessible, strollers permitted
An excellent booklet-guided nature trail circles this popular subalpine lake at the end of Bear Lake Road.				
	LILY LAKE	Lily Lake	0.7 (loop)	Strollers permitted
Look for wildflowers in the spring and early summer along the level gravel trail around a mountain lake.				
	COYOTE VALLEY	Coyote Valley	1.0 (loop)	Strollers permitted
Elk and moose sometimes are seen from this level gravel trail, especially during dawn and dusk.				
	ADAMS FALLS	East Inlet Trailhead	0.3	Hiking trail
It’s a short hike to a dramatic waterfall near Grand Lake on the west side of the park.				
	MORaine PARK VISITOR CENTER NATURE TRAIL	Moraine Park Visitor Center	0.6 (loop)	Hiking trail
Interpretive signs and a full-color booklet guide visitors along this scenic nature trail in Moraine Park.				

CALYPSO CASCADES	Wild Basin	1.8
The waterfall was named in honor of the calypso orchid.		
FERN FALLS	Fern Lake	2.7
This refreshing, inspiring place is perfect for trail breaks.		
OUZEL FALLS	Wild Basin	2.7
These scenic falls are frequently photographed.		
CASCADE FALLS	North Inlet	3.5
A gentle west side hike through a lodgepole forest.		
TIMBERLINE FALLS	Glacier Gorge	4.0
Seeing this jewel of a waterfall is well worth the climb.		

Mountain Summits

All hikes to mountain summits are strenuous. Be sure to thoroughly research your route ahead of time and pack plenty of food, water and extra clothing.

DEER MTN. (10,013’)	Deer Mountain	3.0
Fine views make this a great picnic destination.		
YPSILON MTN. (13,514’)	Chapin Creek	3.5
Some route finding is required as no marked trail leads to Ypsilon’s scenic summit.		
TWIN SISTERS PEAKS (11,428’)	Twin Sisters	3.9
These two peaks offer outstanding vistas. Don’t be misled by a false summit along the way.		

FLATTOP MTN. (12,324’)	Bear Lake	4.4
It’s an arduous climb to this peak offering panoramic views and access to many other great mountain summits.		
ESTES CONE (11,006’)	Lily Lake	3.7
The views from the top of this peak are some of the finest in the park. Be prepared for a steep, rough trail after Storm Pass.		

HIKING ESSENTIALS

✓ Sturdy footwear

✓ Rain gear

✓ Layered clothing

✓ Sweater or jacket

✓ Long pants

✓ Gloves and hat

✓ Extra socks

✓ Sun block

✓ Sunglasses

✓ Whistle

✓ Flashlight

✓ Pocket knife

✓ High-energy snacks



✓ First aid kit

✓ Waterproof matches

✓ Plenty of water

✓ Topo map and compass or other navigational aid

Historic Sites

TUNDRA COMMUNITIES TRAIL	<i>(Strollers okay)</i>	0.5
This paved trail at Rock Cut along Trail Ridge Road leads to panoramic views of the alpine tundra at the Toll Memorial.		
EUGENIA MINE	Longs Peak	1.4
Mine remains in the Longs Peak area recall the dashed hopes of early prospectors.		
LULU CITY	Colorado River	3.7
This 1800s mining camp boomed briefly and went bust.		

Park Visitor Center Information

Five visitor centers are located in the park to assist you during your visit. Hours vary, but all offer park information, restrooms and a park bookstore. The free park movie is shown at Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche visitor centers. Check the park newspaper or www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/visitor_centers.htm for hours and more information.

Beaver Meadows: Located on Hwy 36 west of Estes Park; free park movie; Backcountry Office next door; free Wi-Fi

Fall River: Located on Hwy 34 west of Estes Park; exhibits

Moraine Park: Located on Bear Lake Road; exhibits

Alpine: Located atop Trail Ridge Road; exhibits; adjacent restaurant & gift store

Kawuneeche: Located on Hwy 34 north of Grand Lake; exhibits; free Wi-Fi

Wildlife



Rocky Mountain National Park visitors have a passion for viewing wild animals, especially the large ones. With elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer and moose calling the park home, it's no surprise that wildlife watching is rated the number-one activity by a vast majority of Rocky's visitors.

The park's great large-animal population makes it one of the country's top wildlife watching destinations. But also found in Rocky Mountain National Park are nearly 60 other species of mammals, more than 280 recorded bird species, six amphibians (including the endangered boreal toad), one reptile (the harmless garter snake), 11 species of fish and countless insects, including a surprisingly large number of butterflies. On this page are a few of the wild residents park visitors might encounter.



MULE DEER

Habitat: All habitats

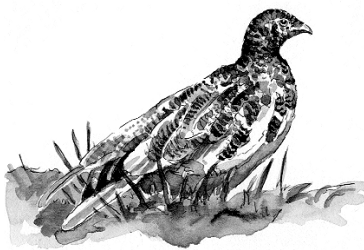
Viewing Tips: At lower elevations, mule deer are most often found in open areas.



COYOTE

Habitat: All habitats

Viewing Tips: The coyote's yipping and howling sometimes is heard in the evening and morning.



WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN

Habitat: Around willows and rock outcrops on the alpine tundra

Viewing Tips: Look carefully. Their excellent camouflage makes ptarmigans hard to spot.



BIGHORN SHEEP

Habitat: Rocky mountainsides and canyons
Viewing Tips: Bighorn sheep often are seen at Sheep Lakes from May through mid-August. Keep your eyes peeled for lambs around mid-June.



YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT

Habitat: Rock piles

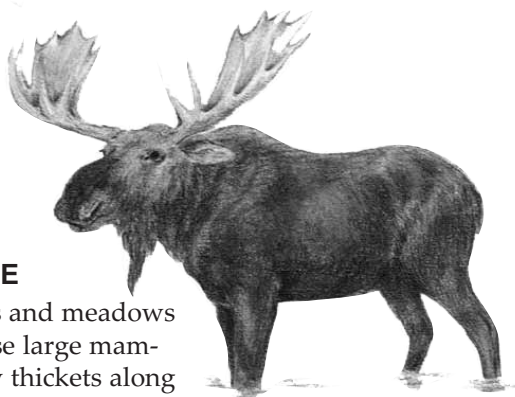
Viewing Tips: Look for marmots sunbathing on rock outcroppings on the tundra along Trail Ridge and Old Fall River roads.



MOOSE

Habitat: Stream beds and meadows

Viewing Tips: These large mammals frequent willow thickets along the Colorado River in the Kawuneeche Valley on the park's west side.



PIKA

Habitat: Rock piles at higher elevations

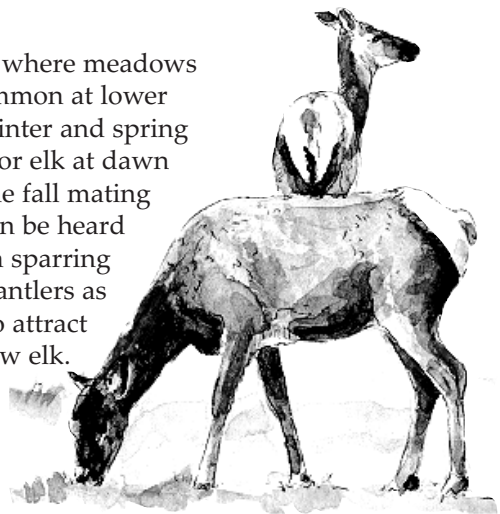
Viewing Tips: Listen for its sharp, distinctive bark and watch for movement among the rocks.



ELK

Habitat: Meadows, and where meadows and forests meet. Common at lower elevations in the fall, winter and spring

Viewing Tips: Look for elk at dawn and dusk. During the fall mating season, bull elk can be heard bugling and seen sparring with their large antlers as they attempt to attract harems of cow elk.



Be Bear Aware!



Rocky Mountain National Park has a small population of black bears. Chances are you won't see one during your visit, but it is very important that your actions do not attract bears, which are, by nature, intelligent, curious and hungry. Once a bear gets a taste of human food, almost nothing will stop it from looking for more. This leads to conflict with campers, park visitors and homeowners, which can eventually lead to the bear's death.

"Food items" include food, drinks, toiletries, cosmetics, pet food and bowls, and other odoriferous attractants. At trailheads, please do not leave any food items in your vehicle. On the trail, keep food items with you at all times. Always keep a clean campsite, in campgrounds and in backcountry sites. Never leave food items unattended. In campgrounds, store food items inside vehicle trunks with windows closed and doors locked or in park-provided bear boxes. At backcountry campsites, all food items must be stored in carry-in, carry-out hard-sided bear-resistant storage containers.

Save a Bear's Life!

WATCHING WILDLIFE TIPS



Never, ever feed wildlife, including birds and chipmunks. Feeding reduces their ability to survive the long mountain winter. When they panhandle by roadsides, animals fall easy prey to automobiles. As they become habituated to humans and lose their natural fear, the animals become aggressive and may be destroyed. Feeding or harassing wildlife is illegal in all national parks.



Wildlife is unpredictable - watch from a distance. For your safety and theirs, use binoculars or a telephoto lens to get close-up views. Following larger animals too closely to get a photograph or a better look can stress them and threaten their health. If animals notice you or if they seem nervous, you are too close. Move away quietly.



Obey all signs posting closed areas. At different times of the year, some areas are closed to protect wildlife during nesting, mating and birthing seasons.



Use of wildlife calls and spotlights is illegal. They stress animals and alter their natural behavior.



Keep pets in your vehicle. They may scare wildlife, and wild animals can hurt your pet.



Large animals such as elk, sheep, bears and mountain lions can be dangerous. Check at visitor centers for valuable tips on safety around wildlife.



Drive slowly and cautiously. Watch for animals crossing the road. Deer and elk are seldom alone. If you see one animal, look for others that may follow.



Stop your car to watch animals only if you can pull off the road safely and completely. Do not block traffic.



When possible, get away from roadsides and sit quietly to observe and listen for wildlife. Talk only when necessary, and do so quietly so you don't disturb the animals or other wildlife watchers. If viewing from your vehicle, turn off the motor. ■



RMNA bookstores recommend:

- *Field Guide to Wildlife Viewing in RMNP*
- *Rocky Mountain Mammals*

Quiet Times

PEACE, NATURE PREVAIL DURING THE QUIET SEASONS

Summer in Rocky Mountain National Park means green meadows, shimmering lakes, plentiful wildlife and flower shows on the alpine tundra. But summer is also the busiest season, when parking areas can fill and some roads and trails can be congested.

Many visitors find that autumn, winter and spring offer different opportunities, when it's relatively more quiet and less busy at Rocky Mountain.

The park is open year-round. Only Trail Ridge Road, Old Fall River Road and some secondary dirt roads are closed by winter's heavy snows, but both sides of the park have miles of open roads to explore year round.

More than half of the park's approximately three million annual visitors arrive during June, July and August, leaving the remainder of the year much less crowded. An average winter day sees only one-tenth the number of people visiting than a typical summer day.

In addition, autumn, winter and spring offer an ever-changing palette of colors and many different activities.

As summer becomes **autumn**, the shortening days trigger changes in the natural world. Two of the park's most anticipated events occur in September and October.

Elk begin moving to lower elevations in preparation for the rut, or mating season. Bulls display magnificent racks of antlers, and their eerie bugling carries across the meadows and forests. Evenings and early mornings are the best times to observe and hear these animals. Favorite elk viewing areas include Horseshoe Park, Beaver Meadows and Moraine Park on the park's east side; Harbison Meadow and the meadow at the Holzwarth Historic Site on the west side.

Autumn comes early to the high country and aspen trees, which occur on both sides of the park, offer the most brilliant colors. Generally, the first golden aspen leaves are spotted in the last week of August, high up on the hillsides. In the Grand Lake area, leaves start changing in early September; on the east side, Bear Lake starts turning in mid-September; in the Estes Park area in late September. Temperature, rain, snow and wind affect when the leaves turn and sometimes cause the leaves to drop early.

A walk through the autumn forests also reveals the reds and golds of numerous understory plants. Autumn days often are



Aspen leaf (Julie Klett)

splendid – crisp and clear with an occasional snowfall.

Winter begins early at Rocky Mountain's high elevations. By mid-November, the Kawuneeche Valley may have enough snow for snowshoe treks and long, gentle cross-country ski tours.

Favorite west side cross-country ski areas include the Bowen-Baker and Holzwarth Historic Site areas, which feature beginner-level routes. The Colorado River Trail and the East and North Inlet trails lead to intermediate and more difficult terrain.

East of the Continental Divide, snows accumulate later in the season. By December, trails from the Bear Lake and Glacier Gorge trailheads lead snowshoers and intermediate-to-advanced skiers to numerous frozen subalpine lakes. The Wild Basin and Sprague Lake areas have gentler terrain for beginner and intermediate cross-country skiers.

For those not looking for snow, some east side hiking trails can be surprisingly snow-free – or nearly so – year-round. Conditions change regularly throughout the season, so be sure to check at a visitor center, or at www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/trail_conditions.htm, for the latest hiking, snow and avalanche conditions before starting out.

Wildlife viewing can be especially rewarding in the wintertime. The sights of a coyote hunting in a snow-covered meadow, of herds of elk with their breath condensing in the air, of a cow and a calf moose silhouetted against the snow, are



Winter brings snow, serenity and regular wildlife sightings to Rocky Mountain National Park. The park's autumn, winter and spring seasons offer smaller crowds and plentiful activities. (Dick Orleans)

unforgettable park images.

Spring arrives at different times in the park, depending on elevation and slope. In the Kawuneeche Valley and Bear Lake areas, spring snowshoeing and skiing are sometimes possible. Meanwhile, lower-elevation areas are starting to bud and bloom.

Mountain bluebirds, which start returning from their winter grounds in early March, are brilliant in flight. Beginning in mid-March, look for nesting raptors on Lumpy Ridge as peregrine and prairie falcons, golden eagles and red-tailed hawks nest on the warm, sunny cliffs. In early April, stroll

Moraine Park to search for the season's first wildflowers, including tulip-shaped pasqueflowers, pink spring-beauties and yellow sage buttercups. Also in early April, ground squirrels and marmots emerge from hibernation.

As the spring season progresses, the melting snowline climbs higher into the mountains. But, those relatively few people who visited the park during the autumn, winter and spring know they and nature shared some very special moments indeed. ■

Discover more winter activities in Rocky at: www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/winter_activities.htm

Scenery and Solitude on Rocky's West Side

Rich in its variety of resources and human history, the park's Colorado River District west of the Continental Divide is filled with opportunities for adventure, exploration, solitude and reflection.

The Utes and Arapahos were the most recent American Indians to frequent the area. They did not settle permanently, but their passages over high mountain passes within the park were regular occurrences. Active settlement in the park's west began during the late 1800s, when ranchers and miners first entered the Kawuneeche Valley. The Civilian Conservation Corps was active during the 1930s, building trails, roadways and a fire lookout in the park, and reservoirs on its borders.

The landscape has changed over the years, but evidence of earlier inhabitants and spectacular views are there for discovery.

A pleasant 3 3/4 miles of hiking along the Colorado River from the Colorado River Trailhead leads to Lulu City, site of an early mining town. The Holzwarth Historic Site, a dude ranch that opened in 1920, is reached after a short walk across a large meadow.

For those who favor longer, more strenuous hikes, the Shadow Mountain Fire Lookout and the Top of the Devil's Staircase are recommended destinations.

The hike to the Shadow Mountain Lookout on the East Shore Trail, which begins at the East Shore Trailhead south of Grand Lake, covers 9.6 miles round trip and 1,533 feet in elevation gain.

The lookout affords unparalleled views of the headwaters of the Colorado River, glimpses of the Continental Divide, a panoramic view of the three lakes – Granby, Shadow Mountain and Grand – and sightings of impressive mountains, including the

Vasquez, Indian Peaks and Gore ranges.

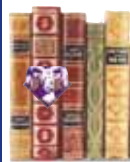
Completed in 1933, this fire lookout was staffed seasonally over several decades. It was occupied as recently as the 2012, when fire danger was exceptionally high. Restored in the mid-1990s, the fire lookout is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hikers begin their approximately seven-mile (round trip) hike to the Top of the Devil's Staircase at the East Inlet Trailhead immediately southeast of the town of Grand Lake. A while after passing a small but exquisite waterfall, the ascent becomes increasingly aggressive, climbing steadily for the next mile.

Hikers pause to enjoy the emerging westward views of Grand Lake as they climb the Devil's Staircase. This section of trail seemingly was etched out of the rock wall. Finally, after a sharp switch-back, the trail arrives at its destination, a rock shelf offering spectacular views. ■



Shadow Mountain Lookout



RMNA bookstores recommend:

► *The Best of the Kawuneeche Valley: An Insider's Guide*

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PARK BOOKS



THE BEST OF BEAR LAKE COUNTRY: A RMNP INSIDER'S GUIDE

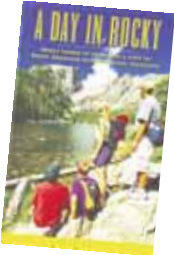
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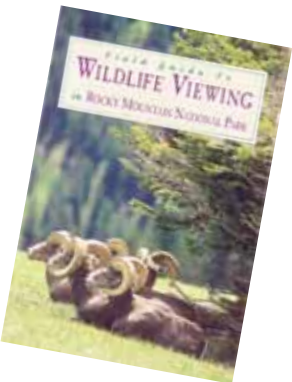
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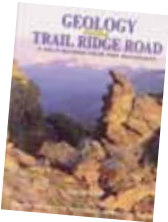
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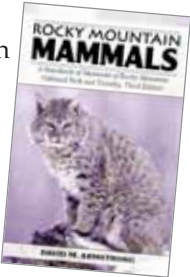


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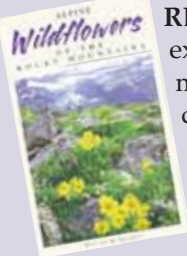
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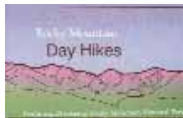


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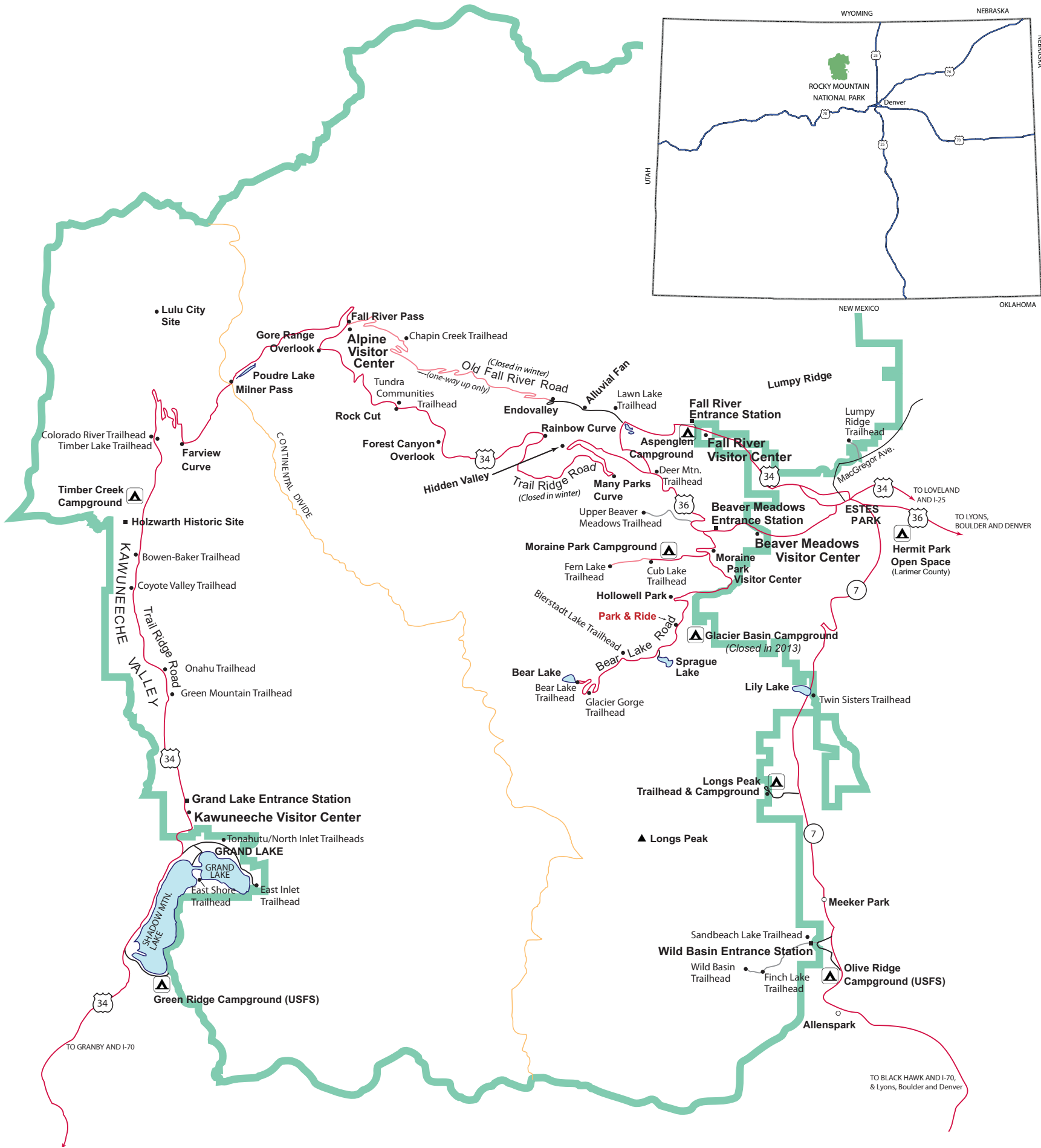
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